

Scottsdale congregation births, nurtures La Sagrada Familia, now serving 600

‘God has been good,” said Pastor José Diaz Rodríguez, mission developer at La Sagrada Familia Lutheran Church. Situated in northeast Phoenix, the church serves an economically depressed community that is 80 percent Latino, with Spanish as the primary language.

Years before this ministry started, a



José and Patricia Diaz Rodríguez began developing La Sagrada Familia in 2004.

neighboring ELCA congregation in Scottsdale—La Casa de Cristo—began distributing needed hygiene supplies to the students of Palomino Elementary School. The congregation consistently served the community, meeting community needs and laying the foundation for a new congregation. “A trust relationship developed that allowed Pastor José to come in with instant credibility,” said Andrew Garman, La Casa de Cristo’s senior pastor.

La Casa de Cristo initially partnered with the ELCA churchwide organization and the Grand Canyon Synod to provide the developer’s salary package. The congregation and its members con-

tinued to support the ministry, providing office assistance, Sunday school teachers, and money for unbudgeted costs. It also purchased and remodeled a house for offices and a small chapel.

“Mission Partners within our congregation helped pay for three acres of land that is now free and clear,” said Garman. “We’ve started a building fund with more than \$500,000 set aside for construction as soon as other Mission Partners step forward!”

Not only has Diaz Rodríguez initiated a busy congregational worship and outreach schedule, he launched a phone tree ministry, mobilizing the congregation and community with announcements, Bible reflections, and prayer chain concerns.

La Sagrada Familia now has two pastors, serving its 600+ worshippers.

Pastor Garman notes that after five years of ministry together, the two congregations still share outreach opportunities, but under the La Sagrada Familia name not La Casa de Cristo. ●



Pastor José gives a children’s sermon.

So you’re going to have a baby!

With this issue, we start a series that looks at the stages of development of new congregations . . . and the varying kinds of support needed.

This issue focuses on the pregnancy.

What do you need to do?

- Prepare the siblings
- Find pray-ers
- Purchase supplies
- Paint the bedroom
- Plan for childcare
- Arrange finances
- Tell family and friends
- ?????



Changes in newsletter, Web site

We're changing.

Our newsletter will now be fewer pages with additional information on our ELCA Web site. Please see www.elca.org/mp/stories

In addition to decreasing our costs, this will give us the opportunity to utilize your input. After reading this issue, please let us know how you or your congregation either supported a new congregation—or were supported by other congregations—during the early planning stages. We'll include as many as possible on our Web site.

We thank all of you who help birth new congregations.

—Deaconess Marlys Waldo, Director for Support Networks, EOCM

Mission spirit alive in Michigan congregation, 22 years after its own storefront beginning

Christ the King, Gladwin, Michigan, with 525 members, might be viewed as a mid-size ELCA congregation.

David Sprang, Christ the King's current pastor, sees it as a faith community where "the mission spirit is still there," 22 years after it was started in April 1986—with seven baptized members growing quickly to 130—and some 18 years after the congregation moved into its new building in June 1990.

In March 1994, Christ the King became a self-supporting ELCA congregation committed to assisting other congregations as a Mission Partner. The congregation helped support four mission congregations annually with \$1,500 raised through special offerings. The five congregations communicate regularly, and some conduct pulpit exchanges.

Each January, Christ the King's members prepare for another year as a Mission Partner by choosing one mission development site to receive congregational support. "Most are multiyear commitments," said Sprang. "Congregation members like that they have a voice in this decision."

The Northwest Lower Michigan Synod provides the names of potential mission sites as soon as the synod authorizes them as worshipping communities. Christ the King requests a new mission site as soon as one of the congregations it has been assisting becomes self-supporting.

Prayer, planning, and support for Christ the King began with the same mission spirit in 1983 within an ELCA predecessor body, the American Lutheran Church. Lutheran congregations in the Bay Conference pledged to provide a place of worship for the rapidly growing population of Gladwin County in the northeast central lower peninsula.

St. John, Saginaw, and Trinity, Midland, helped canvass neighborhoods and distribute publicity flyers. Trinity, Midland, and other Bay Conference congregations raised funds to purchase a parsonage.

This mission spirit—along with the prayer, material, and financial support of ELCA Mission Partners and the leadership of Pastor Roger Hardy, mission developer—propelled the congregation through meeting in a storefront in a "recycled" church building and then while purchasing land and constructing a new building.

Today, with Sprang's leadership, the congregation also participates in synod mission trips to New Guinea, the Philippines, and South Africa, as well as partners with Habitat for Humanity and Thrivent Builds. ●



Pastor Sprang of Christ the King, Gladwin, Michigan, anoints infant with oil following his baptism.

Mission Partners Focus is published three times per year. Send address changes or stories to:

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ELCA congregations may reprint this newsletter in part or in its entirety.



Bridge of Peace has made a concerted effort to reach out to community youth. Lately, this outreach has included 60 young people.

Bridge of Peace serves divided Camden, New Jersey communities

147 prayer partners prayed each week for a year

Bridge of Peace literally bridges a physical and psychological barrier between a historically African-American and a historically white neighborhood in Camden, New Jersey—one of the poorest and most violent cities in the United States. The congregation’s sanctuary is located near a bridge connecting the two neighborhoods.

Bridge of Peace, which began in 2000 and organized as a congregation of the ELCA in 2007, has grown into a community connector by nurturing mutual relationships with the community, 18 Mission Partners, the New Jersey Synod, and the ELCA as a whole.

The New Jersey Synod prepared

for five years to open Bridge of Peace by retaining a closed church building and providing door-to-door canvassing training. The churchwide organization and the synod then partnered to provide funding for a mission developer.

Once the developer was called, he organized the “Dream Team” vision and prayer group. He asked friends and colleagues for the names of 10 people each willing to pray once weekly for a year for Bridge of Peace. And, he kept them up-to-date on progress and needs through newsletters and e-mail updates. A total of 147 prayer partners volunteered! ●

Welcome the mission developer!

- Organize a get-together for area pastors and families as well as lay leaders to meet the new developer and family.
- Plan an “office shower” so items are available from day one.
- Make a list of contacts that may be helpful to the family, i.e., recommended doctors and dentists, the best place to get pizza, the names of trusted babysitters, etc.
- If the developer has children, invite children of similar ages from nearby congregations to construct and mail cards of welcome, with photos, prior to their arrival.
- Make a list of resources available to the new ministry. Which nearby congregations are willing to share office space, clerical time, a copier, musicians, people willing to canvass the neighborhood, financial support?



Pray without ceasing

Prayer partners—congregations who pray every Sunday in corporate worship and individuals who commit to praying every-day—are needed and wanted for potential new congregational starts:

- that the site chosen for this ministry will be effective in reaching people;
- that a Spirit-filled mission developer be found;
- that this ministry be grounded in prayer;
- that God might soften the hearts of potential worshippers;
- that other congregations in the community be welcoming and supportive;
- that God-inspired lay leaders be a part of the core group; and
- that sufficient funding be found to support this ministry.

Contact your Director for Evangelical Mission (through your synod office) for a list of congregations for whom you might be praying.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Mission Builders

Couple enjoys chance to give back with Mission Builders

Since becoming involved with Mission Builders in 2006, Rich and Chris Bryne of Granada Hills, California, enjoy serving God, making new friends, traveling the United States, and assisting in different congregational construction projects.



Rich Bryne, with wife Chris, wears a t-shirt that reads "And God said... Build it."

ago, they saw an article in *The Lutheran* magazine that intrigued them by combining their love of service with their love of travel. A few years later, they purchased a fifth wheel trailer, and a year after that, they began traveling for Mission Builders.

"The four projects that we have been involved in during the last three years have been uniquely different," said Rich. "We love the variety and travel."

The Brynes have traveled to Southeastern Minnesota, Southwestern Texas, and to Minnesota's Northwoods: "I pound the nails while Chris joins the con-

"We were operating our own senior day-trip business, but we were looking for 'something else' in our lives," said Chris.

The Brynes had been active in the Lutheran church as long as they could remember, following the example of their parents and grandparents. Several years



Mission Builders and volunteers raise an inside wall on the education wing of the new church building at Bethany, Nevis, Minnesota, one of several the Brynes have worked on.

gregations' activities to offer support and encouragement as they strive to spread the gospel," said Rich.

"God has been so good to us that it is time to give back to the mission of the church," said Rich.

"Through Mission Builders, we serve God and make great friends. The more we give, the more we receive."

ELCA Mission Builders are dedicated Christians who work for their Lord, helping congregations, schools, camps, and social ministry organizations of the ELCA build their facilities.

A typical project includes Mission Builders, members of the congregation, and various professionals working side-by-side.

While building structures, Mission Builders also build up the kingdom.

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